

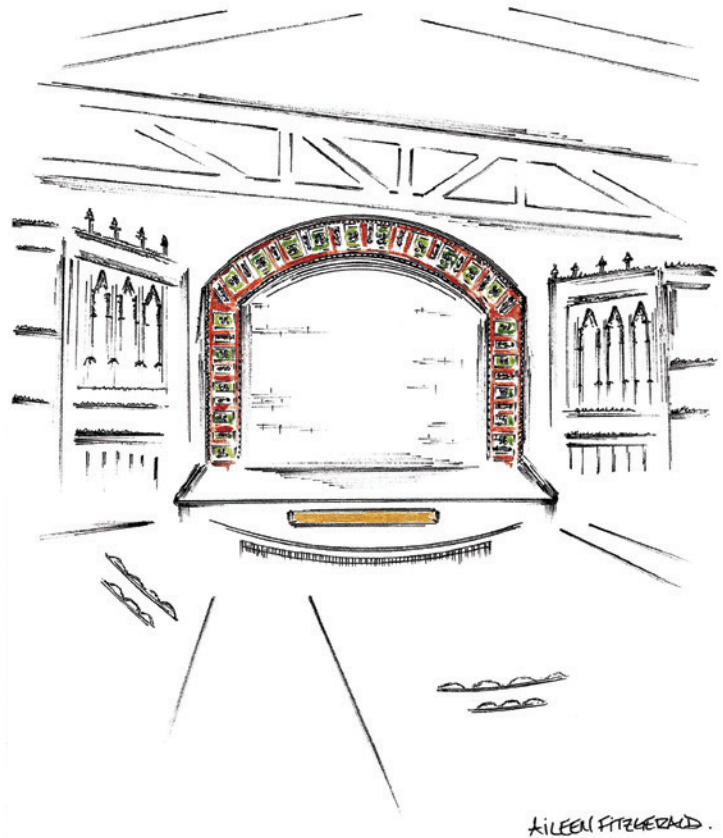
# THE RETURN OF the Catlow Theatre

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The Catlow 1927 Foundation and its generous sponsors will restore and preserve the iconic Catlow Theatre for future generations

*Julianne and  
Brian Long*

BY Lisa Stamos | PHOTOGRAPHY BY Linda M. Barrett



THESE HAND-DRAWN ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CATLOW THEATRE ARE FOR USE BY THE CATLOW 1927 FOUNDATION. THE THEATRE INTERIOR SHOWS THE FULLY RESTORED AND VISIBLE PROSCENIUM ARCH THAT EXISTS BUT HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM VIEW. FOLLOW ARTIST AILEEN FITZGERALD @AILEEN.FITZGERALD.CREATIVE OR VISIT AILEENFITZGERALD.COM.

*“I am so very grateful for all the folks who have supported the Catlow Theatre during the past 97 years, and I am thrilled that Julianne and Brian Long are taking on the restoration of it now.” –Diann Foley (Wright Raymond Catlow’s Granddaughter)*

SEVERAL YEARS from now, we might look back and realize that the Village of Barrington experienced a cultural Renaissance in the first decades of this century, much like that at the turn of the last century. Just over 126 years ago, the largest home, a posh Victorian, was built in the heart of Barrington. Today, the beautifully restored home, named Barrington’s White House, serves the region as a cultural center that offers enriching programs and events. Nearly 100 years ago, a local businessman, Wright Raymond Catlow, envisioned and built the Catlow Theatre, featuring a Tudor Revival exterior design by Betts & Holcomb of Chicago, an interior designed by Italian American artist Alfonso Iannelli, was built by Janesville, Wisconsin based T.S. Willis. Both properties are on the National Register of Historic Places.

### DANCING ON THE PRAIRIE

Wright Catlow’s father, Joseph G. Catlow, built Barrington’s first community center, an auditorium, on West Station Street in 1916. The local newspaper headline noted that Catlow “Would Answer the Crying Need of the Village for a Public Hall.” He built a venue that could accommodate large numbers

of people for dining, dancing, basketball games, and plays. Years later, when the auditorium no longer existed, his son, Wright, built the Catlow Theatre. It opened on Wright’s birthday, May 28, 1927.

The Catlow Theatre began with well-known traveling vaudeville acts, having a small orchestra pit to accommodate musicians. When Chicago was a center of country music, the Catlow was an important stop on the circuit for the National Barn Dance, a WLS Radio live show, and for other well-known musicians including Gene Autry. Vaudeville had tremendous influence on the formation of advertising, social attitudes, and mass entertainment as we know it today.

Then came the Golden Age of Hollywood. The first moving picture films, which were silent, were paired with live organ music in the theatre. Later, when talkie films arrived, and vaudeville faded away, a large, permanent movie screen was placed blocking the proscenium and the stage behind it, and live entertainment gave way to movies on film, and more recently, movies delivered digitally.

### ENTER STAGE LEFT

The Catlow was owned by three parties before Julianne and Brian Long purchased the property. The theatre had been left unattended for a few years and was falling into disrepair. In what the couple believes was a miraculous moment, the closing of their purchase took place the very day the building was set to be sold for back taxes to a third-party buyer, whose intentions were unknown.



THE INTERIOR OF THE CATLOW THEATRE WAS DESIGNED BY ALFONSO IANNELLI TO INSPIRE VISITORS.

Brian Long, an alumnus of The School of the Art Institute in Chicago, owns Long & Co. Jewelers in Barrington and he and his wife, Julianne, are invested in the Barrington community. They raised their two children here, Jocelyn and Brenton, and giving back to the community has always been a priority. They saw the theatre as an essential and iconic piece of history that deserved preservation. The couple also identified with the Prairie School elements in the theatre, a topic Brian studied in school, notably the 100-year-old mission tiles on the lobby floor. The two have been collecting Prairie items for their home, such as furniture, pottery, and linens for years.

### A PLACE OF FIRSTS

The Catlow Theatre is a place most locals can relate to. It's where you saw your first movie. You'll never forget your first date there. It's the first place you were hired for a part-time job. Before you could drive, it was the first place you would walk to or ride your bike for meeting up with friends (besides the pool, in summer). The Longs have those memories, too. Brian took Julianne on dates to the Catlow. Their son, Brenton, had his first job there selling tickets, working concessions, and making sandwiches at the former restaurant, Baloney's. Who knows how many people have walked through the Catlow doors over a century, being inspired first by the 'living art' of its interior design, and then by the entertainment.

### BUILDING A FOUNDATION

Shortly after acquiring the Catlow Theatre, the Longs realized that the undertaking to repair and restore the property to its original glory—not to mention urgent roofing repairs—would need more financial resources than they could supply on their own. They made immediate emergency repairs to exterior masonry and interior heating systems just in time to survive the first winter as the new owners. They saved historic memorabilia found that dates back to 1927.

The couple's next step was to establish a foundation to fund the expansive and detailed restoration of the theatre. Once the venue can reopen, it will be host to a variety of shows and live events, recalling its historic start during the vaudeville era, while still showing movies periodically on a retractable screen. It will serve the community greater than ever before.

*The Catlow 1927 Foundation is partnering up with the Sanfilippo Foundation for a movie fundraising event at the Sanfilippo Estate. Details will be released soon. For details visit: [sanfilippofoundation.org](http://sanfilippofoundation.org). To learn more about The Catlow Foundation, or information on how to donate and participate with recognition opportunities, visit [catlow1927.org](http://catlow1927.org).*



### Joy Foley Visits the Catlow Wright Raymond Catlow's Great Granddaughter

"I think I was there on October 14, 2019. I don't remember the exact day. I was in the Chicago area for a conference, and I drove up to Barrington on my last day. It was very meaningful for me to get to see a piece of my family history, especially since I never met those people. It was especially serendipitous, because the day I was there was a big community event where people were painting local landmarks. I saw many artistic renderings of the Catlow Theater and got to sit down and chat with some of the members of the historical society. I tried to buy a piece, but it was difficult to coordinate since I was leaving the state that day."

# THE VAUDEVILLE Live Entertainment Era



*Salty Holmes  
Feb 7 1947  
WLS, Chicago Ill*

SALTY HOLMES WAS A FAMOUS ENTERTAINER WHO TRAVELED WITH THE NATIONAL BARN DANCE SPONSORED BY WLS RADIO. HIS SIGNATURE DATED 1947 IS ON THE WALL OF THE "GREENROOM" AT THE CATLOW.



IANNELLI'S GARGOYLE-LIKE ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL AND HIS HAND PAINTED STENCILING.



GENE AUTRY WAS AN AMERICAN ACTOR, MUSICIAN, SINGER, COMPOSER, RODEO PERFORMER, AND BASEBALL TEAM OWNER WHO PERFORMED AT THE CATLOW THEATRE DURING ITS FIRST YEARS IN BUSINESS.

NUMEROUS ROPES USED FOR VAUDEVILLE SHOW BACKDROPS STILL HANG IN THE CATLOW THEATRE.



A CHECK REORDER FORM FROM 1931 WAS FOUND ALONG WITH OTHER MEMORABILIA. THE "777" PHONE NUMBER WAS LOST FOR YEARS, BUT A FRIEND OF THE LONGS WAS ABLE TO RETRIEVE IT FROM AT&T BY REACHING THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE COMPANY. THE PHONE NUMBER OF THE CATLOW IS 847-381-0777.

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**THE CATLOW THEATRE**  
116 W. MAIN ST.  
PHONE 777

No. 1003

BARRINGTON, ILL., 193

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# THE GOLDEN AGE OF Hollywood at the Catlow



A FILM REWINDER



A 1952 MOVIE POSTER



AN ORIGINAL CATLOW THEATRE CHAIR SIDE PANEL IS EMBELLISHED WITH ART DECO STYLE DETAIL.



THE BEAUTIFUL PROSCENIUM (LEFT) THAT DEFINES THE STAGE SPACE HAS BEEN BLOCKED FOR YEARS BY A PERMANENT MOVIE SCREEN. THIS ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT WILL BE FULLY RESTORED AND VISIBLE.



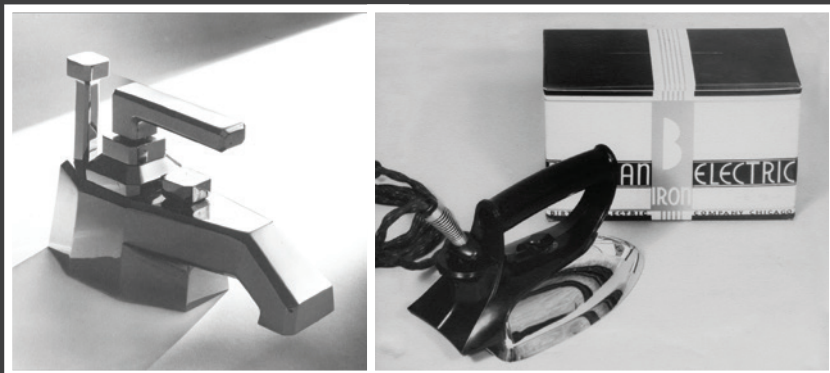
ALFONSO AND MARGARET IANNELLI WERE A HUSBAND-AND-WIFE DESIGN TEAM (DECEMBER 1912).

## Who Was Alfonso Iannelli?

It has been said about Alfonso Iannelli that he was a Renaissance man marooned in the early 20th century, and instead of creating altarpieces and carving saints, he put his creative energies in the 1930s to 1950s into the design of electric knife sharpeners, coffee makers, and drink mixers. Iannelli's style often emphasized geometric forms, abstraction, and the integration of art with functional design, all characteristics commonly associated with Modernism. He also designed the interior of the Catlow Theatre, including its hand-carved gargoyle-like masks and hand-painted stencils, and his water-fountain sculpture, Fountain Girl, is a local treasure.

Born in Italy, Iannelli was hired by the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles to create a series of posters to promote vaudeville acts (1910-1915). He moved to the Chicago area when a call came from Frank Lloyd Wright, whose brother John noticed Iannelli's Modernism artistry. The Midway Gardens project of 1914, a European-style concert garden with space for year-round dining, drinking, and performances, was underway and Iannelli was asked to design a series of sculptures to serve as architectural punctuation. After World War I, Midway Gardens was demolished.

After working with Wright, Iannelli and his artist wife Margaret opened Iannelli Studios in Park Ridge. The Studios grew to become one of Chicago's most famous art studios at the time, expanding into commercial design, advertising, product design, and architectural interiors. They made their mark on the Chicago area, from the Adler Planetarium and Prudential Building in Chicago to the Pickwick Theatre in Park Ridge and of course, with the 1926-1927 interior design of Barrington's historic Catlow Theatre.



A MODERN FAUCET AND THE BOX PACKAGING FOR AN IRON ARE TWO OF THE MANY INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS BY IANNELLI.



THIS ALFONSO IANNELLI DESIGNED MODERNISM POSTER WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE ORPHEUM THEATER IN LOS ANGELES (1910-1915) TO PROMOTE THE VAUDEVILLE MUSICAL ACT OF PIANIST AND SONGWRITER GEORGE WHITING AND SINGER SADIÉ BURT.



ALFONSO IANNELLI CREATED THIS POSTER TO PROMOTE AN EXHIBITION OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT DESIGNS HELD ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1963, AT THE UNITY TEMPLE IN OAK PARK, ILLINOIS.